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AUTHOR Foster, Carl G.: And Others
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ABSTRACT

Because Special Educator turnover and existing modes of instruction were causing minimal progression of exceptional Indian students, representatives of the nine schools involved in Chinle Agency's Special Education Department decided during the fall of 1979 to develop and implement programs that better met the needs of exceptional students. By revising the curriculum agency-wide to include sequential criteria for math, reading, language arts, and behavior, hopefully the turnover rate of Special Education teachers would be decreased. A majority of the committee felt that math was the easiest discipline to adjust and that the Agency-adopted San Diego Sequential Task for Educational Planning (STEP) could be revised to establish objectives to meet chosen math goals. The remainder of 1979 was devoted to the development of "learning experience packets" and "exit-tests" for each math objective and a pre-posttest for the program. Use of the math objectives for the entire agency was expected to eliminate problems associated with students changing schools and to act as a guide for teachers in meeting the needs of exceptional students. Only math has been completed and implemented, and it is anticipated that three more years will be needed to complete all of the components of the curriculum. (CM)

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CHINLE AGENCY'S SPECIAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM REVISIONS: IT'S RATIONALE, PROCESS, AND WANTED OUTCOMES

Dr. Carl G. Foster
Northern Arizona University

Ms. Emma Gable
Director of Special Education
Chinle Agency

Ms. Dottie Hobson
Superintendent of Education
Chinle Agency

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Introduction

Special Education programming on reservations is faced with many unique problems which may cause the exceptional child not to receive an adequate education. Problems range from the hiring and the keeping of certified Special Educators to coupling the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of the Indian exceptional student. Each tends to compound the other to the point that the exceptional student is not receiving a valid instructional direction and each is possibly promoting instruction that is out of compliance with the intent of P.L. 94-142.

Historically, the teacher turn over has been a problem on reservations. The hiring and the keeping of Special Educators, who desire to acquire a working understanding of the exceptional Indian student, has been and is a major problem. Some have rationalized this exodus by indicating that reservation schools are too isolated or the Indian exceptional student's needs are too foreign for the anglo trained Special Educator. Whatever the reason, many tend not to stay over three years and some seem to experience cultural shock for the duration of their tenure.

Directly related to Special Educator flight, is the direction of the curriculum. The continuous influx and termination of teachers to the Special Education program has a tendency to inhibit curriculum

directionality. Beginning teachers bring new ideas to the classroom but, also a neophyte's view of the environment. These ideas and views tend to be counter productive to the existing instructional direction, for they often confuse the student. New teaching constitutes new learning--for the student. New learning is associated with slower learning and, therefore, a reduction in desired outcomes. In addition, continuous fluctuation of teachers facilitates minimal acclimatization to the culture which, in turn, coupled with new teaching techniques promotes acultural practices. This aculturation process augments the Indian exceptional student's inabilities to progress.

Teacher movement and curriculum implementation are activated by one another and compound one another. The continuous turn over of Special Educators promotes a directionless curriculum. And a directionless curriculum increases the teachers' flight. A novice teacher tends to introject instruction that is not in cohesion with the culture and/or the curriculum. Consequently, the student is forced to learn in an unfamiliar way and slows down in the completion of tasks. The slowness of task completion activates teacher-student frustration. Frustration builds to the point that conflict occurs. Conflict promotes more frustration which eventually causes removal. Thus the teacher activates the student to the point

that neither are effective. The Special Educator becomes frustrated and leaves and the student continues to not acquire the education mandated.

The Program

Being concerned about the exceptional Indian student and the present plight of Special Education programming on reservations, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency's Special Education Department, undertook a project to crystalize adequate instruction and teacher stability. During the Fall of 1979, several meetings were held to discuss the existing Special Education programming. Duscussed was how present instruction was meeting the needs of the exceptional child and the teacher of the exceptional child. It was concluded that Special Educator turn over and existing modes of instruction were possibly causing minimal student progression. Present at the meetings were the Director of Special Education; classroom teachers; Special Education teachers; aides; teacher supervisors; and the Agency's Education Diagnostician. Based upon the conclusions, these representatives of the nine Agency schools decided to develop and implement programming that better met the diverse needs of the exceptional community through the adjustment of the adopted B.I.A. Special Education curriculum. Further, the committee agreed that the curriculum must be revised to include

qualitative procedures with predetermined criteria developed and utilized as a foundation for instructional direction. Many seemed to feel that with the development of specific criteria, student instructional outcome would be greater and Special Educator flight would be reduced. All strongly felt that criteria should be developed for math; reading; language arts; and behavior, which would serve as a guide for every school in the Agency.

To insure that the qualitative criteria concept was adequately developed, the committee decided to devote the remainder of the 1979-1980 academic year to adjusting the math component of the Special Education curriculum. The majority felt that since math was composed of so many finite principles, it would be the easiest to adjust in accordance to their newly formulated belief. To provide a foundation, the Agency adopted San Diego Sequential Task for Educational Planning (S.T.E.P.), was reviewed. As the committee evaluated the math S.T.E.P. it was found that much of the programming was overlapping and unnecessary. Further, the committee indicated that the overlapping of instruction could possibly promote teacher confusion which may increase student instructional reduction. However, the committee did express that the reporting procedures of the S.T.E.P. were very good and could be used to expedite more efficient

I.E.P. writing. Thus, it was decided that, where necessary, the math S.T.E.P. be revised in such a manner to establish objectives that need to be accomplished to meet a wanted math goal but that the reporting system of the S.T.E.P. be kept and used as it already was.

In November, the committee began revising the S.T.E.P. to desired criteria. Sequential objectives were wanted for each math goal. Also, that "learning experience packets" be developed for each objective along with an "exit test" designed to measure the completion of that objective. Lastly, based upon the objectives, a Pre-Posttest be developed to measure where the child should be placed in math and how much the child has learned during the academic year. Each member of the committee was assigned a math goal, i.e., addition, subtraction, etc., and charged with the development of objectives for that goal. All agreed to incorporate participation from members of their school into the formulation of the objectives as much as possible.

During December, the committee met to review and revise the completed objectives. All objectives were discussed in detail with additions or deletions made. A comprehensive list was printed and discussed again. Further revisions were incorporated with a suggestion that several copies of the final draft be

passed out to Agency math teachers for additional input. Upon the return of these copies, the committee met again to discuss and incorporate the math teacher recommendations and finalized.

The remainder of the academic year was devoted to the development of "learning experience packets," for each objective, "exit-tests" for each objective, and a Pre-Posttest for the program. The committee member who developed a particular set of objectives became the individual who designed the "packets." Once again all actively sought assistance from individuals in their building. The committee met frequently to review and discuss the packets. All seemed to agree that the packets should serve as a guide for the teacher and should be left open enough so that the teacher could adjust instruction to the age or ability of the student. All, furthermore, seemed to feel that the exit test must not be adjusted by individual teachers since they were constructed to meet the objective and that teachers should not progress to another objective until the child passed the "exit-test" with 100 percent accuracy. With all the packets completed, "exit-test" questions were incorporated into the Pre-Posttest, with purpose to enable the teacher to quickly evaluate the child's knowledge of math and to select the proper objective and packet to augment math direction and/or measure student's math progression.

Conclusion

The Chinle Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs became aware that possibly their present Special Education programming was not adequately meeting the needs of the exceptional student and may be facilitating Special Educator turn over. Consequently, they are presently taking steps to remediate the situation through the revision and/or adjustment of existing B.I.A. adopted curriculum programming that more adequately meets the needs of the Agency's Special Education Participant.

Through a committee, present programming was evaluated with specific outcomes wanted. All seemed to be in favor of developing a workable Special Education program that was qualitative in nature with specific criteria that guaranteed wanted completion. A need was seen to develop sequential criteria in math, reading, language arts, and behaviors. Because of the finite nature of math and the newness of the qualitative concept, it was chosen to be the beginning academic, the San Diego S.T.E.P. program was reviewed and revised in accordance with wanted outcomes. Objectives, packets, exit tests and a Pre-Posttest were constructed to promote an Agency standard direction.

Although only math has been completed and implemented, the Chinle Agency has begun to redress what seemed to be a minimum curriculum and teacher turn over. In order to complete all of the components of the curriculum, three years will be necessary. However, the Agency has a math component that will more adequately meet the needs of the student. Teachers across the Agency have one set of objectives that they feel need to be accomplished. Furthermore, the developed "learning experience packets" provide a guide of instruction for the attainment of the objective with the "exit-test" evaluating whether the child has completed the objective. The Pretest provides the teacher with a quick evaluation of where the child is and what should be taught. Also--at the end of the year--the Posttest confirms the number of objectives completed and, therefore, the amount of learning that has taken place.

Since the math is being used for the entire Agency, the constant moving from one school to another by a student will not create a problem for the Special Educator. The objective the child was in at one school will be the same for the other. Also, to the new teacher, the "packets" provide a guide of what needs to be taught to complete the objective. This crutch can be used until the teacher more adequately understands the environment. In addition, regular teachers

who have the exceptional child mainstreamed have a set of objectives and a guide to aid them to meet the needs of the student.

The Chinle Agency Special Education program has begun to actively adjust its instruction to meet the needs of all concerned. It is not perfect--but it is a beginning. It has a long way to go to complete all the wanted components of the curriculum--but it has come a long way. The idea is unique and workable. Time will tell as to its success. Chinle has begun and that is possibly more than can be said of others.